

REMARKS

This application has been reviewed in light of the Office Action dated January 12, 2006. Claims 1, 2, 6, 7, 15, 16, 26 and 27 are presented for examination. Claims 1, 6 and 15 have been amended to define still more clearly what Applicant regards as his invention. Claims 26 and 27 have been amended to ensure consistency of terminology; no change in scope is either intended or believed effected by at least these latter changes. Claims 1, 6 and 15 are in independent form. Favorable reconsideration is requested.

Claims 1, 2, 6, 7, 15, 16 and 27 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over U.S. Patent No. 5,579,126 (Otsuka) in view of U.S. Patent No. 5,598,533 (Yokota) and U.S. Patent No. 5,825,854 (Larsen). Claim 26 has been rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Otsuka in view of Yokota and Larsen, and further in view of U.S. Patent No. 5,295,181 (Kuo).

As shown above, Applicant has amended independent Claims 1, 6 and 15 in terms that more clearly define what he regards as his invention. Applicant submits that these amended independent claims, together with the remaining claims dependent thereon, are patentably distinct from the cited prior art for at least the following reasons.

Claim 1 is directed to an image reading apparatus, connected to a plurality of external printing apparatuses via a network. The image reading apparatus includes: (1) generation means for reading an image and generating an image signal; (2) selection means for selecting one from the plurality external printing apparatuses; (3) input instruction reception means for receiving an input instruction indicating whether or not the input of user management information is necessary from the selected external printing apparatus;

(4) input control means for controlling the input of the user management information so as to be inputted in accordance with the instruction; (5) output means for outputting the inputted user management information to the selected external printing apparatus; (6) reception means for receiving, from the selected external printing apparatus, availability information indicating whether or not the using of the selected external printing apparatus is allowed, wherein the availability information is determined based on the output of the user management information; and (7) transmission control means for controlling transmission such that the generated image signal is transmitted to the selected external printing apparatus, in accordance with the availability information.

Among other notable features of Claim 1 is (1) input control means for controlling the input of the user management information so as to be inputted in accordance with the instruction; and (2) transmission control means for controlling transmission such that the generated image signal is transmitted to the selected external printing apparatus, in accordance with the availability information.

Otsuka does not teach or suggest all of these features and, from the Office Action, it is understood that the Examiner does not disagree.

Otsuka relates to a facsimile apparatus which is linked to a local area network including two or more personal computers and operates on the local area network as a facsimile server for transmitting of document files. The Otsuka system records the sending history of a user of a facsimile apparatus and only sends password information to the facsimile apparatus and not to a reception station of the document files. In the Otsuka system, there are three types of devices, a source station (one of a plurality of personal computers and/or an external station), a facsimile apparatus, and one of a plurality of

reception devices. Otsuka discusses a log-in procedure to start a computer session, where the facsimile apparatus requests a user to enter a user name and password on a source station, and receives the user name and password from the source station. However, nothing has been found in Otsuka that would teach or suggest an input control means for controlling the input of the user management information so as to be inputted in accordance with an instruction indicating whether or not the input of user management information is necessary from the selected external printing apparatus, as recited in Claim 1 (emphasis added).

The Office Action cites column 13, lines 12-30 of Otsuka as disclosing the transmission control means of Claim 1. Applicant respectfully disagrees. The cited passage merely discusses receiving a document from the source station via a concentrator 40, storing the document file in the facsimile apparatus and sequentially printing out document files in the order of print requests. Otsuka, however, fails to teach or suggest controlling transmission such that the generated image signal is transmitted to the selected external printing apparatus, in accordance with availability information indicating whether or not the using of the selected external printing apparatus is allowed, as recited in Claim 1 (emphasis added).

Neither Yokota, which is cited as teaching to connect a PC to a scanner to form an image reading apparatus, nor Larsen, which is cited as teaching to connect a plurality of fax machines for printing, is seen to remedy the deficiencies of Otsuka with respect to the input control means and transmission control means discussed above.

Accordingly, Applicant submits that Claim 1 is patentable over Otsuka, Yokota and Larsen, whether considered separately or in any permissible combination (if

any).

A review of the other art of record has failed to reveal anything which, in Applicant's opinion, would remedy the deficiencies of the art discussed above, as a reference against Claim 1.

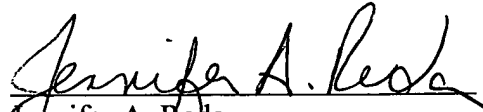
Independent Claims 6 and 15 are method and computer readable memory claims, respectively, corresponding to apparatus Claim 1, and are believed to be patentable over the cited art for at least the same reasons as discussed above in connection with Claim 1.

The other claims in this application are each dependent from one or another of the independent claims discussed above and are, therefore, believed patentable for the same reasons. Since each dependent claim is also deemed to define an additional aspect of the invention, however, the individual reconsideration of the patentability of each on its own merits is respectfully requested.

Early and favorable continued examination of the present application is respectfully requested.

Applicant's undersigned attorney may be reached in our New York office by telephone at (212) 218-2100. All correspondence should continue to be directed to our below listed address.

Respectfully submitted,


Jennifer A. Reda
Attorney for Applicant
Registration No.: 57,840

FITZPATRICK, CELLA, HARPER & SCINTO
30 Rockefeller Plaza
New York, New York 10112-3801
Facsimile: (212) 218-2200

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